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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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CLOTHING CARE

A Question of Meaning. What does colorfast mean to you? Does it mean colorfast to light, drycleaning, perspiration, washing--or what? There are many kinds of colorfastness in fabrics, so you may have to ask to find out exactly what you're buying. In general, fabrics or yarns that have been dyed before weaving are more colorfast than fabrics dyed after weaving. You can tell if the fabric has been dyed after weaving if the torn end is white or light colored. For complete confidence, remember this U.S. Department of Agriculture hint: Unless the manufacturer guarantees the colorfastness of his fabric, there's no way to tell colorfastness for sure.

Out, Wax Spot. Nothing's more beautiful than candles with dinner. But nothing's more distressing than wax stains on your best dress or table linens. The stain can be removed, however, by following advice from fabric experts at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Scrape the spot with a dull knife. Then place the stained cloth between clean white blotters or several layers of facial tissues and press with a warm iron. To remove the slight stain that remains, sponge with a grease solvent.

Musty Mildew. Where there's dampness there may be mildew. Keep your home dry and you probably won't run into trouble with your clothes. But if you do find mildew on clothing remove it immediately so the article won't weaken or rot. The U.S. Department of Agriculture clothing experts suggest you brush off the surfact mildew outdoors so the spores aren't scattered around the house. Then you can use a fungicidal product, but remember to wet the surface of the article to be cleaned thoroughly.

ONLY IN AUGUST

Tree Talk. August is the critical time for watering trees. So let the grass go and water your trees and shrubs. The grass will come back with the first rain, the U.S. Department of Agriculture advises.



Food For a Jamboree. Feeding 12,000 boys can be a chore--especially if they meet in one place. That's what's going to happen when the Boy Scout International Jamboree convenes this month in Idaho. The job will be made easier, however, with seven tons of donated food from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Scouts will eat more than 2,400 cans of chopped meat, as well as numerous other foods. This won't be the only camp eating donated food though. USDA-donated foods are widely used in non-profit summer camps across the nation.

Plan Your Iris Now. If you want your backyard to blaze in glory this spring, start now. Plant the ever-popular iris that are hardy, long-living perennials needing little care. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says late summer or early fall is the best time to divide and transplant them. To learn about starting iris, and for tips on caring for them, write for "Growing Iris in the Home Garden," Home and Garden Bulletin No. 66, available for 5 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402. Please include your zip code.

Picnic Pointers. Don't let sickness spoil your summer fun. Prevent it during picnics by using a good cooler or insulated food carriers to keep your food fresh. Good picnic products--cooked meat and poultry items such as fried chicken, cooked sausages, or luncheon meats--don't spoil rapidly. U.S. Department of Agriculture home economists report it's smart to freeze raw meats before you leave so they'll stay cooler. And at the picnic, leave the actual preparation of sandwiches and salads until you're ready to eat. Salad dressings and mayonnaise are very susceptible to food poisoning bacteria.

PUBLICATIONS

The Pest Toll. How does your garden grow? Is it healthy and green, or are insects making it their summer playground? If insects and diseases are giving your garden trouble, you'll be interested in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new bulletin. It tells how to control more than 100 insects and diseases. Copies of "Insects and Diseases of Vegetables in the Home Garden," Home and Garden Bulletin No. 46, can be obtained for 30 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402. Please include your zip code.

PICKING SUMMER'S BEST

Tomato Talk. The tomato is a misunderstood vegetable. It often suffers from improper storage and care. A tomato picked in a mature pink-colored stage must not be chilled until fully ripened. Chilling interrupts the ripening process and the tomato may never ripen properly, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture food specialists.

Bountiful Blueberries. It's blueberry time again. Plan to use them in cereals, pancakes, muffins and desserts. Buy blueberries that look fresh, are firm and dry, and have a deep blue color. Also--U.S. Department of Agriculture specialists note--fresh berries usually have a silvery bloom of a natural waxy protective coating.

Thumpers Take Heed. Want a ripe, rich watermelon? The only way to judge watermelon ripeness is by looking inside, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says. So if you don't want to take chances, buy a watermelon the store has cut and placed on ice. Don't thump it. Look for a good, red color, dark brown or black seeds, and firm flesh. Avoid dry, mealy flesh or watery, stringy flesh that shows darkening and softening of tissue next to the seeds.

A Real Melon. Any type of melon is a treat during the summer. To make sure you're getting the best one, follow these suggestions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

*The best cantaloupe has a thick, coarse netting. Check the ripeness by looking for a smooth stem scar, a color change to yellowish buff or gray or pale yellow and a characteristic fruity odor.

*Honeydews are ripe when the rind has a creamy to yellowish color. The blossom end opposite the stem end will soften slightly when ripe. Immature honeydews are whitish green, but they keep well. To ripen a honeydew--keep it at ordinary room temperatures.

USDA RESEARCH

Dieter's White Cake. Diet conscious homemakers awake! You can now make a cake that looks and tastes good, but has half the fat of a regular cake. Most recipes call for one part fat for every four parts flour. But U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers have discovered you can reduce this to one part fat for every eight parts flour, or even lower. Home economists also said muffins could be made with half the amount of fat, biscuits with two-thirds as much, and pastry with three-fourths as much.

Heat Treat. Imagine subjecting fresh produce to blasts of hot water. Wouldn't you expect the produce to wilt? It doesn't though, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture engineers. In fact, treatments in hot water and hot air kill many decay organisms that attack fruits and vegetables during marketing. The result of the treatment is fresh fruits and vegetables that are more attractive and keep longer in the refrigerator. The heat treatments have no adverse effect on appearance, firmness or taste, and they're potentially cheaper, safer and easier than chemical decay controls. Some of the treated produce now available--or soon to be--are cantaloup, peaches, lemons, apples, berries, peppers, sweet potatoes and mangoes.

New Flavor in Packages. Packages you can eat? They're the newest thing from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA scientists developed this tasteless, colorless fat that is being sprayed on food in thin layers. The fat "package" locks out oxygen and protects food from freezer burns, drying out, and discoloring during refrigeration and freezing. The fat, which becomes part of the cooking fat or gravy, is edible and has been used on meat, fish, poultry, cheese and other foods. The fat costs about 50 cents a pound, but this is expected to drop with increased demand and improved production methods. Department economists estimate that about 35 million pounds of edible coatings are now used--and they expect this to double in a few years.

Cleaning Quiz. Should electric blankets be dry cleaned? No, U.S. Department of Agriculture electric specialists report. Also it's best not to use dry cleaning fluids on electric blankets because the fluids can damage the insulation on the electric wiring. Follow the laundering directions that come with the blanket. They usually suggest short wash, rinse and spin cycles. Use cold or warm water and don't dry the blanket in a dryer.

Paint Pointers. How long has it been since you last painted your house? U.S. Department of Agriculture specialists say a good white paint should last at least 4 or 5 years, while tinted paints are good for 5 or 6 years, and dark-color paints last up to 6 or 8 years. The specialists suggest you don't paint until the old film has weathered, and that when you do paint it's wise to use the same type of paint as the last time.

FOOD HINTS

August Plentifuls. Turkey's the smart buy during August. But so are other featured foods. The U.S. Department of Agriculture suggests the wise shopper try new recipes that use the August plentiful: Peanut butter, fish fillets and steaks, seasonal vegetables, lemons and limes.

A Little Economy. Looking for a way to stretch your food dollar? Round steak is more economical because it has little waste and each section has different uses, say U.S. Department of Agriculture home economists. Top round can be broiled when it's USDA Prime or Choice grade. The eye of the round also can be broiled when it's top grade. Bottom round is excellent for braising as Swiss steak.

Old Wives' Tales...They're just not true! Meat doesn't have to be thawed before cooking. You can cook frozen or thawed meats with equally good results, U.S. Department of Agriculture food specialists report. But remember--a large frozen roast may take as much as one and one-half times as long to cook as a thawed-out cut of the same weight and shape.

Keep Ice Cream Fresher Longer. Ice cream packed in ordinary waxed-cardboard cartons will keep its quality a lot longer in your home freezer if you wrap the cartons in heavy aluminum foil, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture food specialists. Also make sure the freezer is holding a temperature of 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

Billion-Dollar Market. Consumers will probably spend one billion dollars on convenience foods containing chicken and turkey this year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates one billion dollars will be spent on diverse items like chicken breasts, chicken pizza, boneless turkey and others.

For information about items in this issue, write: Editor of SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.